Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GABORO 00566 011702Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 MCT-01 AID-05 PC-01
/085 W
----------076217 011723Z /43
O 281520Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO AMEMBASSY MASERU NIACT IMMEDIATE
SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1688
INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DAR ES WALAAM PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LAGOS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LILONGWE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 0566

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS:MOPS PGOV PINS BC RH
SUBJ: AMBUSH OF BOTSWANA DEFENSE FORCE PATROL

REF: (A) GABORONE 0562 (NOTAL), (B) PRETORIA 0884 (NOTAL),
(C) GABORONE 0499 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: IN ADDRESS TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AFTERNOON OF
FEB 28 AND WHICH WAS BROADCAST LIVE ON NATIONAL RADIO,
BOTSWANA VICE PRESIDENT MASIRE SAID THE FOLLOWING CONCERNING
THE FEB 27 AMBUSH OF A BOTSWANA DEFENSE FORCE PATROL IN WHICH
FIFTEEN SOLDIERS WERE KILLED:
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PAGE 02 GABORO 00566 011702Z

QUOTE

IT IS WITH DEEP SORROW THAT I HAVE TO INFORM THIS HONOUR-
ABLE HOUSE OF THE DEATH OF 15 OF OUR YOUNG SOLDIERS NEAR
LESOMA, WHICH IS ABOUT 13 KILOMETRES FROM KAZUNGULA,
YESTERDAY. EIGHT OTHERS WERE INJURED, OF WHOM THREE ARE IN A

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

CRITICAL CONDITION, AND SEVEN ARE STILL MISSING. TWO CIVILIANS
WERE ALSO KILLED.

THIRTY SOLDIERS WERE SENT IN THREE VEHICLES FROM KAZUNGULA
TO INVESTIGATE REPORT THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF RHODESIAN
SOLDIERS, PREDOMINANTLY WHITE, HAD BEEN SEEN IN THE AREA.
THE REPORT HAD BEEN MADE BY TWO YOUNG MEN WHO ACCOMPANIED THEM.
OUR SOLDIERS DID NOT COME ACROSS ANY RHODESIAN SOLDIERS WHERE
THEY WERE REPORTED TO BE. ON THEIR RETURN TO KAZUNGULA ALONG
THE MAIN NATA/KAZUNGULA ROAD ABOUT ONE KILOMETRE FROM THE BOTSWANA/
RHODESIA BORDER, THEY WERE AMBUSHED BY MEMBERS OF RHODESIAN
SECURITY FORCES WHILE TRAVELLING IN THEIR VEHICLES. THE RHO-
DESIAN STATEMENT THAT OUR SOLDIERS WERE FIGHTING ON THE SIDE
OF THE ZIMBABWE FREEDOM FIGHTERS IN THE AREA IS A FLATANT
LIE. NO FREEDOM FIGHTERS WERE SEEN BY THE BOTSWANA DEFENSE
FORCE. AS A RESULT OF THE ATTACK, THE THREE VEHICLES WERE
DESTROYED BY FIRE. SOME OF THE SURVIVORS MANAGED TO RETURN
ON FOOT TO KAZUNGULA. REINFORCEMENTS WERE SENT TO RECOVER
THE REMAINING WOUNDED AND THE DEAD.

SUBSEQUENT REPORTS SAY THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF RHODESIAN
TROOPS HAVE BEEN MOVED TO THE RHODESIAN SIDE OF THE BORDER
AT KAZUNGULA TODAY AND THE SITUATION IS EXTREMELY TENSE.

MR. SPEAKER, ALL MEMBERS OF THE BOTSWANA DEFENSE FORCE HAVE
BEEN ISSUED WITH EXPLICIT ORDERS THAT THEY ARE NOT TO PROVOKE
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ANY INCIDENTS WITH THE RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES AND THAT THEY
ARE TO SHOOT ONLY IN SELF DEFENSE. THESE ORDERS HAVE BEEN
METICULOUSLY ADHERED TO. WE HAVE ALSO MAINTAINED OUR WELL-
KNOWN POLICY OF NOT PERMITTING OUR COUNTRY TO BE USED AS A
SPRINGBOARD FOR ATTACKS AGAINST OUR NEIGHBORS. I AM, THEREFORE,
AT A COMPLETE LOSS TO UNDERSTAND THE REASONS FOR THIS BRUTAL
AND UNPROVOKED ATTACK. THIS IS THE ACT OF AN INSANE RGIME
WHICH IS PURPORTING TO NEGOTIATE A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IN
SALISBURY WHILE ITS AGENTS ARE MASSACRING NATIONALS OF
NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES IN THOSE COUNTRIES.

MR. SPEAKER, WE HAVE ADHERED TO OUR POLICIES IN SPITE OF THE
FREQUENT AND CONTINUED VIOLATIONS OF OUR SOVEREIGNTY BY THE
ILLEGAL REGIME. NOT EVEN OUR HARSHEST CRITICS CAN ACCUSE US
OF LACK OF FORE-BEARANCE. HOWEVER, THE TIME HAS COME FOR US
TO RECONSIDER OUR POLICIES AND OUR ENTIRE APPROACH TO THE
RHODESIAN PROBLEM AND WE WILL DO SO WITHOUT DELAY. AS AN
IMMEDIATE MEASURE, WE HAVE DECIDED TO CLOSE THE BORDER POST
ON OUR BORDER WITH RHODESIA AT KAZUNGULA.
UNQUOTE

2. COMMENT:

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

A. WE ARE ALSO THUS FAR AT A COMPLETE LOSS TO EXPLAIN THIS APPARENTLY WANTON AND UNPROVOKED ATTACK. THE V.P.'S REFERENCES TO THE RHODESIAN CHARGE THAT BDF SUPPORTING GUERRILLAS, AND TO "PREDOMINANTLY WHITE" RHODESIAN TROOPS APPARENTLY QUASH ANY MACHIAVELLIAN SUSPICIONS THAT THE ATTACK MIGHT HAVE BEEN MOUNTED BY BLACK NATIONALIST FORCES. IF THEN, WE ACCEPT THAT THIS AGGRESSION REALLY WAS PERPETRATED BY RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES, WHY DID THEY DO IT? WE SHALL BE PROBING FOR THIS ANSWER.

B. ONE POSSIBILITY THAT OCCURS TO US IS THAT THZHRHOBESIANS MAY HAVE RECEIVED REPORTS SIMILAR TO THAT TRANSMITTED IN REF B, WHICH MIGHT CAUSE THEM TO BELIEVE (INCORRECTLY) THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 GABORO 00566 011702Z

NORTHERN BOTSWANA WAS BEING CONVERTED INTO A ZIPRA BASE FOR OPERATIONS AGAINST RHODESIA. AS NOTED IN REF C, THIS POSSIBLE CONVICTION ON THE PART OF THE RHODESIAN GOVERNMENT COULD VERY WELL GIVE RISE TO RETALIATORY MILITARY ACTION AGAINST BOTSWANA.

C. WE ARE NATURALLY DISTURBED BY MASIRE'S REFERENCE TO RECONSIDERATION OF POLICIES. THIS MAY MEAN A GREAT DEAL, SUCH AS A GOB DECISION TO ALIGN ITSELF FORTHRIGHTLY WITH THE OTHER FL STATES IN CONDEMNING THE SALISBURY TALKS OR EVEN TO ACCEPT LONG-STANDING SOVIET OFFERS OF MILITAJY EQUIPMENT; OR IT MAY BE MERELY A FORMULA DESIGNED TO BUY TIME AND ALLOW TEMPERS TO COOL A BIT. AS OF NOW, THE BATSWANA ARE SHOCKED AND FURIOUS --- THAT MUCH WE KNOW.

3. ACTION REQUESTED:
A. FOR CAPE TOWN, PRETORIA AND LUSAKA: CAN YOU SHED EVEN A GLIMMER OF LIGHT ON THIS TRAGIC AND PUZZLING INCIDENT?

B. FOR DEPARTMENT:

(1) APIRECIATE WNY RELEVANT ANALYSIS BY THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY.

(2) DOES DEPARTMENT OR WHITE HOUSE PLAN TO SEND CONDOLENCE NOTE TO PRESIDENT KHAMA, OR SHALL WE DO SO? PLEASE ADVISE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SPEECHES, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE, BORDER INCIDENTS, DEATHS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978GABORO00566
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780093-1336
Format: TEL
From: GABORONE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978025/aaaaadpn.tel
Line Count: 162
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Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 77c6f2d8-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
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Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 GABORONE 562, 78 PRETORIA 884, 78 GABORONE 499
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3579848
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AMBUSH OF BOTSWANA DEFENSE FORCE PATROL
TAGS: MOPS, PGOV, PINS, BC, RH, (MASIRE, QUETT KJ)
To: MASERU STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/77c6f2d8-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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20 Mar 2014
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